

VERTIGO

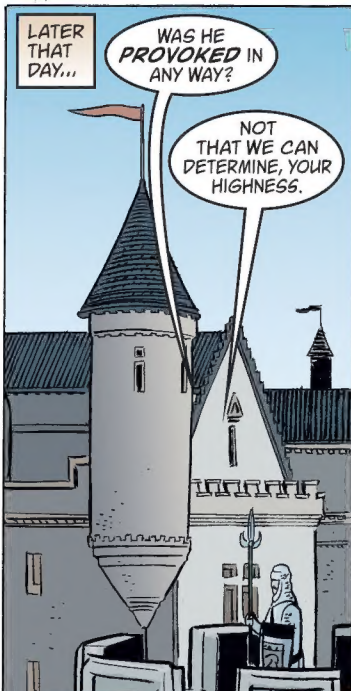


F A B L E S

◆ WILLINGHAM ◆  
◆ LAPHAM ◆

93  
May '10

suggested for  
mature readers  
vertigo.com



LATER THAT DAY...

WAS HE PROVOKED IN ANY WAY?

NOT THAT WE CAN DETERMINE, YOUR HIGHNESS.



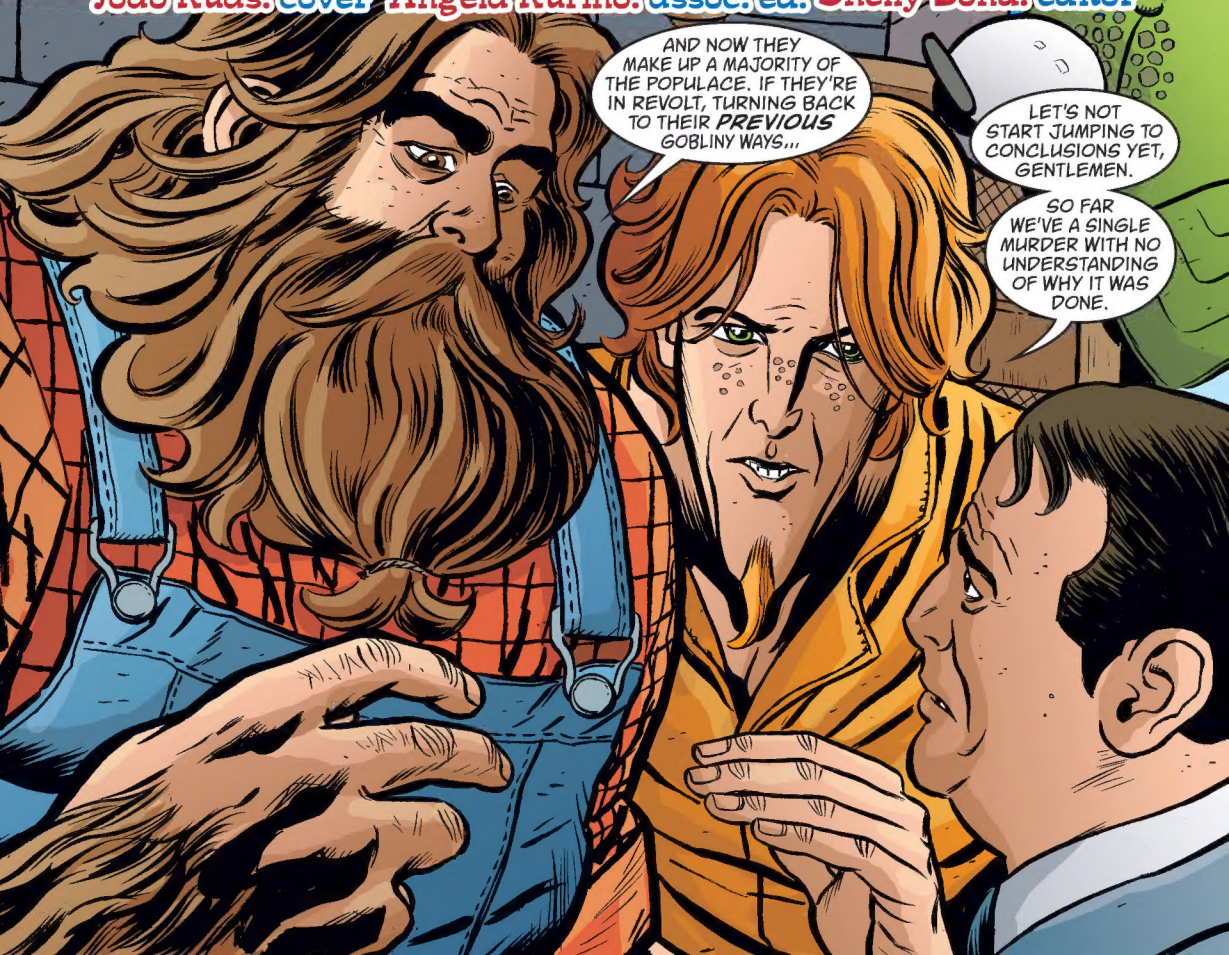
HE'S STILL SLEEPING OFF LAST NIGHT'S WILD DRUNK, AND FROM HIS MUMBLES WALKING BACK HERE, I CAN'T SAY HE EVEN KNOWS WHY HE WAS ARRESTED.

THIS IS A TERRIBLE BUSINESS, TO BE SURE. YOUR GOBLIN SUBJECTS HAVE CONDUCTED THEMSELVES WELL UNTIL NOW, SIRE.

# The Little Murder Part 2 of 2

**Bill Willingham:** writer/creator   **David Lapham:** guest artist   **Lee Loughridge:** colors   **Todd Klein:** letters

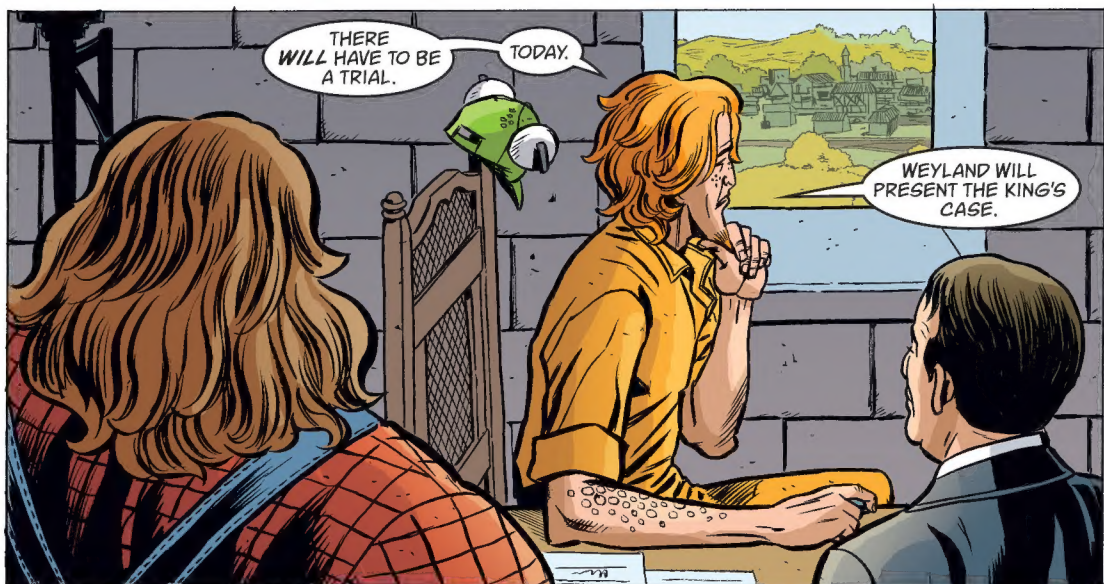
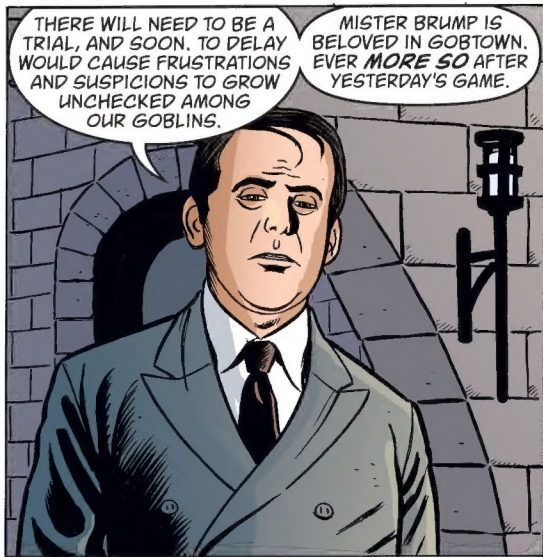
**Joao Ruas:** cover   **Angela Rufino:** assoc. ed.   **Shelly Bond:** editor

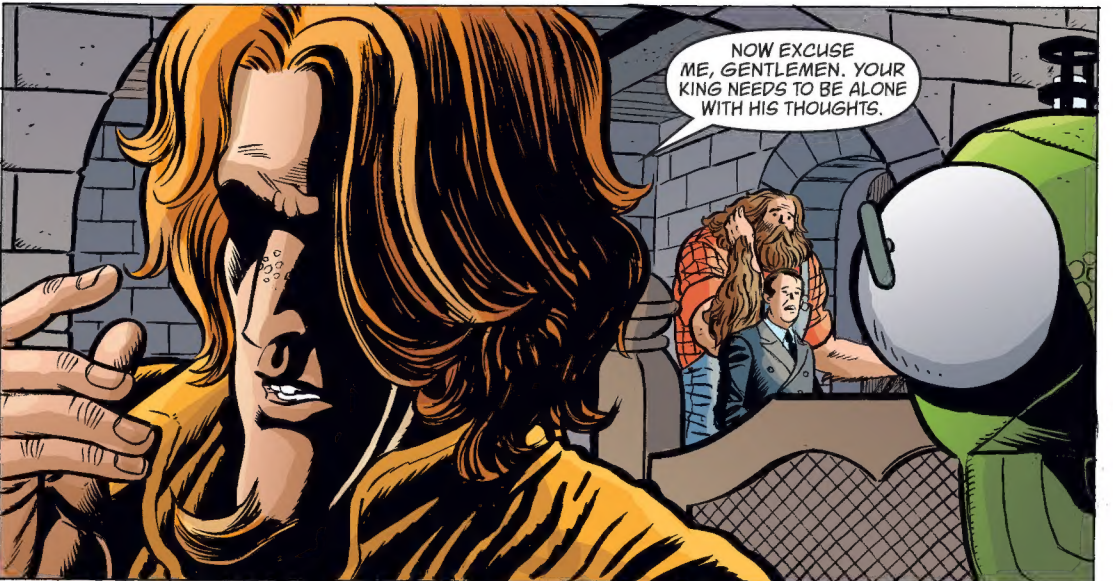
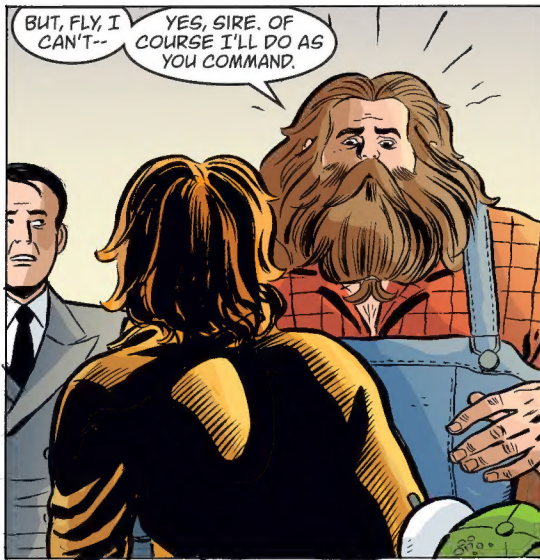


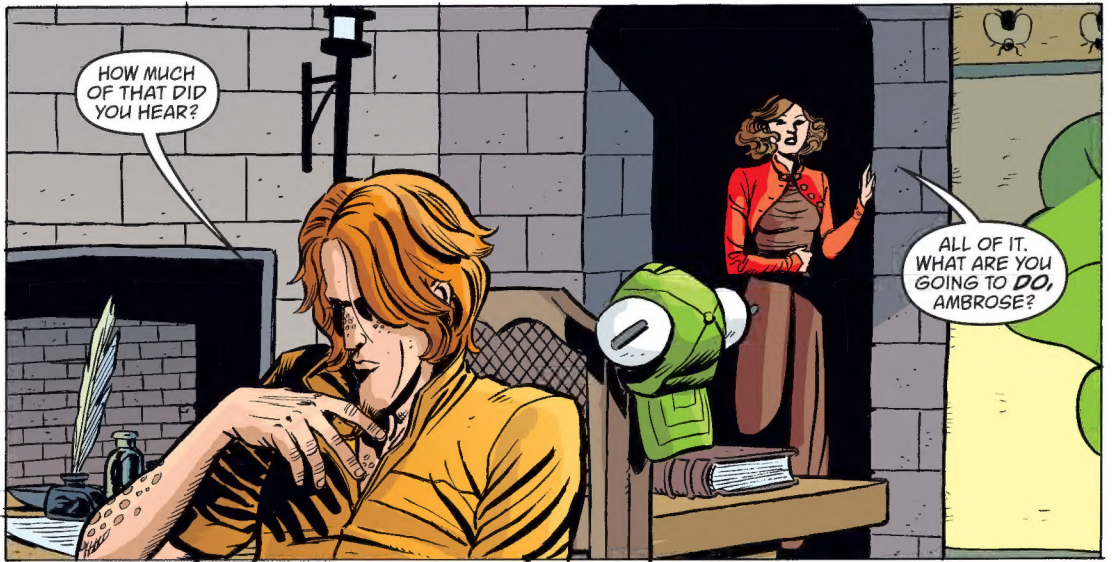
AND NOW THEY MAKE UP A MAJORITY OF THE POPULACE. IF THEY'RE IN REVOLT, TURNING BACK TO THEIR PREVIOUS GOBLINY WAYS...

LET'S NOT START JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS YET, GENTLEMEN.

SO FAR WE'VE A SINGLE MURDER WITH NO UNDERSTANDING OF WHY IT WAS DONE.

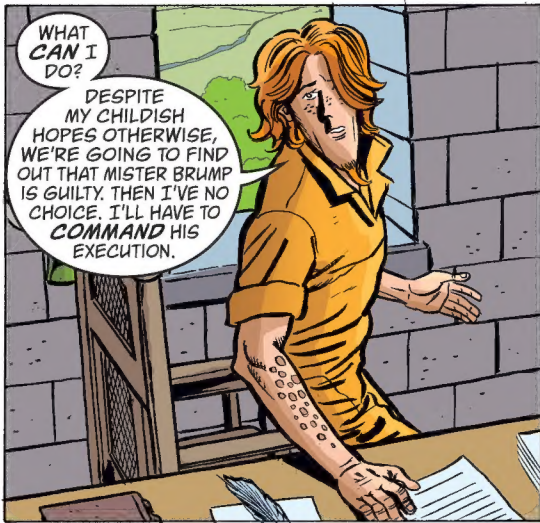






HOW MUCH OF THAT DID YOU HEAR?

ALL OF IT. WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, AMBROSE?



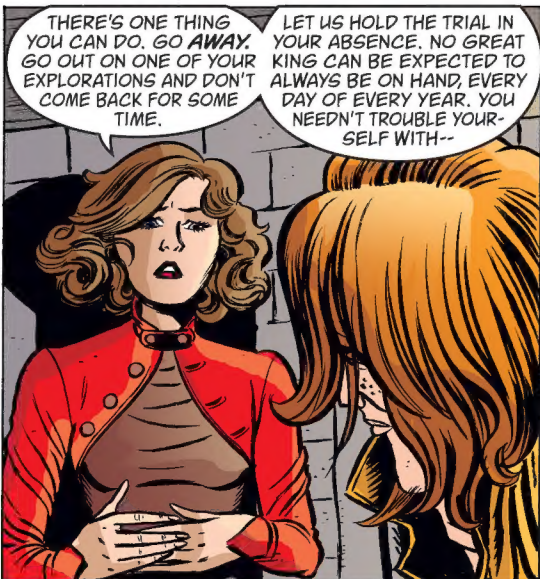
WHAT CAN I DO?

DESPITE MY CHILDISH HOPES OTHERWISE, WE'RE GOING TO FIND OUT THAT MISTER BRUMP IS GUILTY. THEN I'VE NO CHOICE. I'LL HAVE TO **COMMAND** HIS EXECUTION.



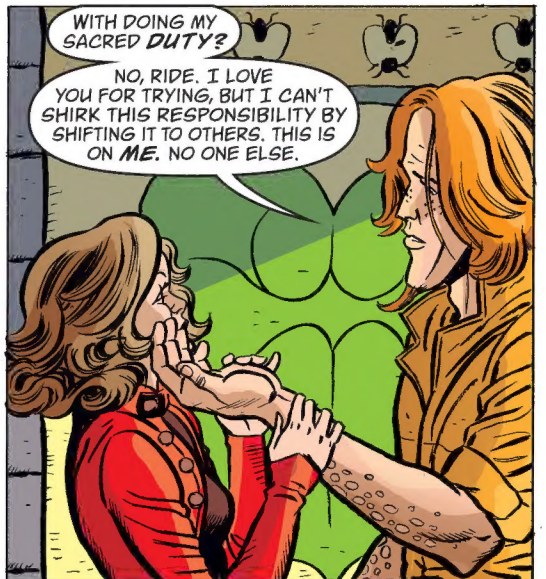
BLUE IS PROBABLY LAUGHING AT ME FROM HIS GRAVE.

I THOUGHT I COULD BUILD HAVEN WITHOUT EVER GETTING BLOOD ON MY HANDS. HE'D **SCOFF** AT MY NAIVETÉ, WERE HE STILL AMONG US.



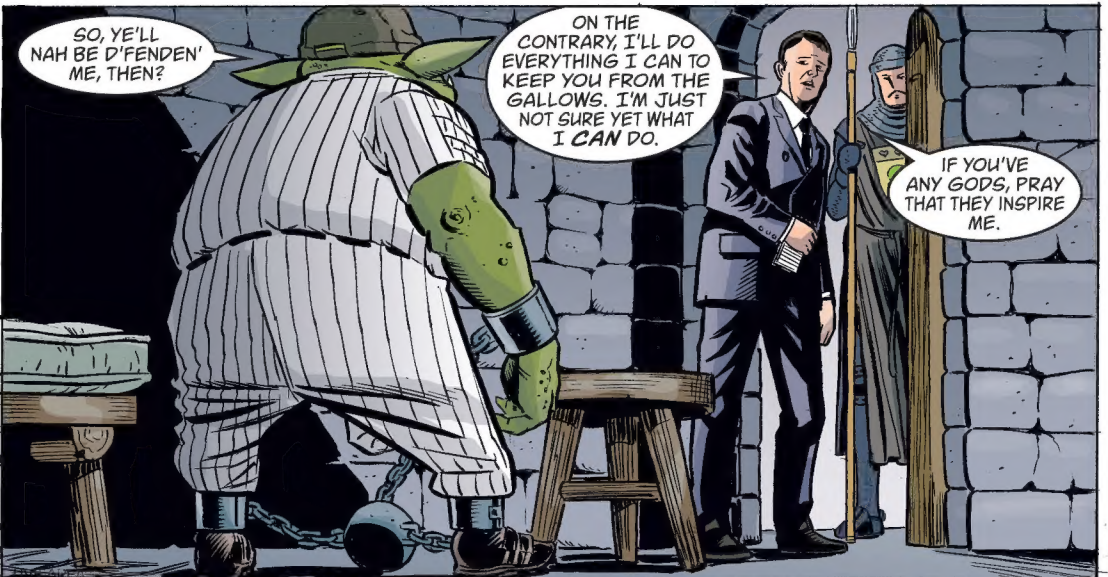
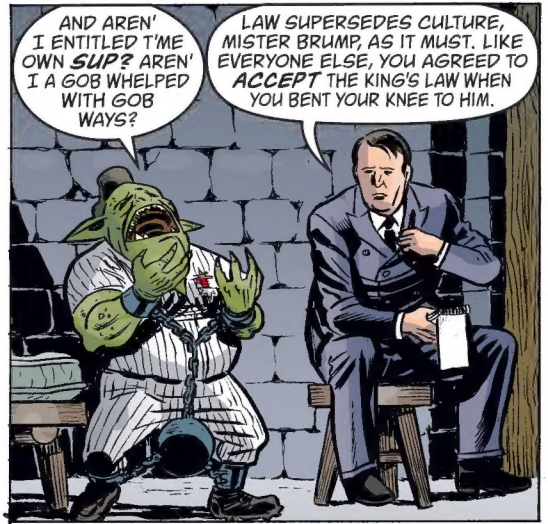
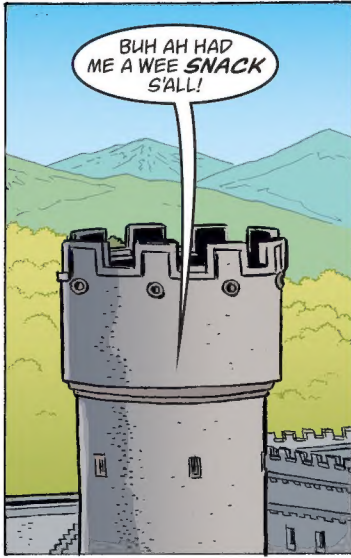
THERE'S ONE THING YOU CAN DO. GO **AWAY**. GO OUT ON ONE OF YOUR EXPLORATIONS AND DON'T COME BACK FOR SOME TIME.

LET US HOLD THE TRIAL IN YOUR ABSENCE. NO GREAT KING CAN BE EXPECTED TO ALWAYS BE ON HAND, EVERY DAY OF EVERY YEAR. YOU NEEDN'T TROUBLE YOURSELF WITH--



WITH DOING MY SACRED DUTY?

NO, RIDE. I LOVE YOU FOR TRYING, BUT I CAN'T SHIRK THIS RESPONSIBILITY BY SHIFTING IT TO OTHERS. THIS IS ON **ME**. NO ONE ELSE.





AND THEY JUST ARRESTED HIM? WHY?



WHO KNOWS? BUT NO MATTER WHAT THE SO-CALLED CHARGES MAY BE, WE CAN DISCERN THE REAL REASON.

BRUMP BEAT THE KING'S OWN TEAM IN THE BASEBALL TOURNAMENT.



WHAT KING IN THE ENTIRE HISTORY CAN ABIDE SO PUBLIC A HUMILIATION, I ASK YOU?

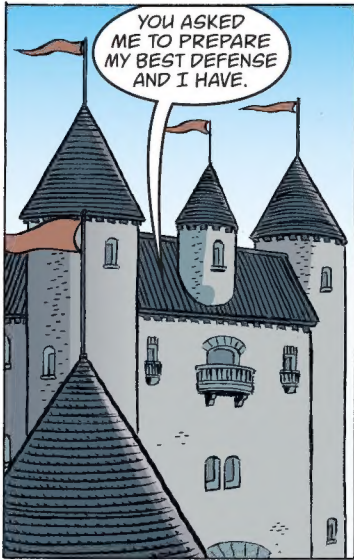


WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

FIRST, TO FIND WHEREVER IT IS I PUT MY SKULL-CHOPPER.



THEN TO ADDRESS MY GRIEVANCES TO THE HIGH AND MIGHTY KING HIS OWN SELF.



YOU ASKED ME TO PREPARE MY BEST DEFENSE AND I HAVE.



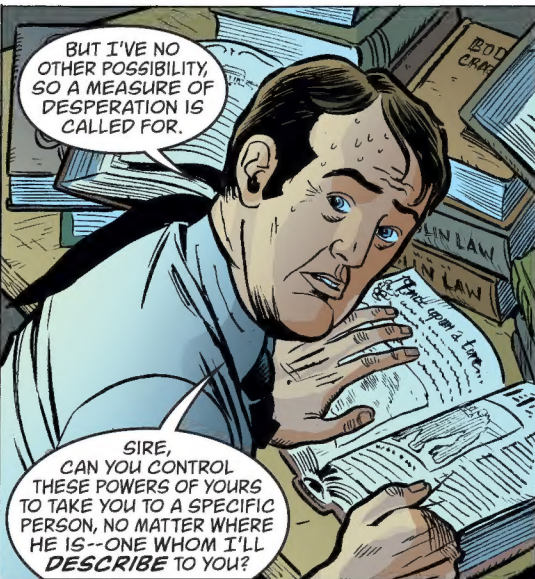
BUT I NEED *HELP*. I DON'T HAVE THE MAGICAL ABILITY TO INSTANTLY GO ANYWHERE INTO THE WIDE VASTNESS OF CREATION, AS YOU DO.

I NEED TO FIND A VERY PARTICULAR FABLE OUT OF ALL THAT EXIST IN THE WORLDS OVER. OUR ONE AND ONLY DEFENSE WITNESS.



WHO IS HE, JOHN? OF COURSE I'LL GO FETCH HIM.

I'M NOT SURE OF HIS NAME OR LOCATION, OR EVEN IF HE ACTUALLY EXISTS. SOME TALES WERE JUST THAT--FABLED NONSENSE.



BUT I'VE NO OTHER POSSIBILITY, SO A MEASURE OF DESPERATION IS CALLED FOR.

SIRE, CAN YOU CONTROL THESE POWERS OF YOURS TO TAKE YOU TO A SPECIFIC PERSON, NO MATTER WHERE HE IS--ONE WHOM I'LL DESCRIBE TO YOU?



I'M NOT SURE, JOHN. LET'S FIND OUT.

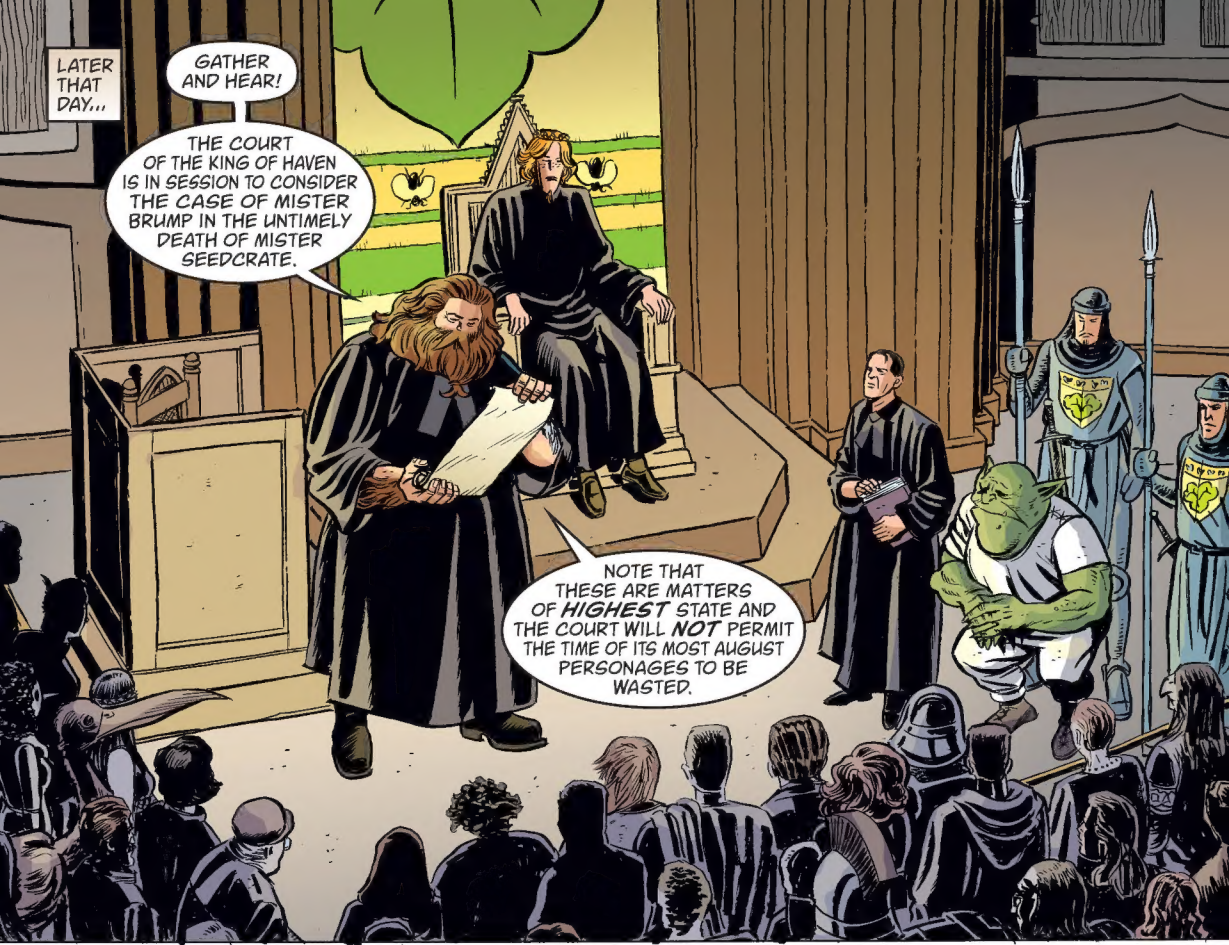


LATER THAT DAY...

GATHER AND HEAR!

THE COURT OF THE KING OF HAVEN IS IN SESSION TO CONSIDER THE CASE OF MISTER BRUMP IN THE UNTIMELY DEATH OF MISTER SEEDCRATE.

NOTE THAT THESE ARE MATTERS OF HIGHEST STATE AND THE COURT WILL NOT PERMIT THE TIME OF ITS MOST AUGUST PERSONAGES TO BE WASTED.



THIS UNDERTAKING WILL BE BRIEF. I WILL PRESENT THE CASE FOR THE CROWN, INTERVIEWING OUR WITNESS AND MISTER BRUMP, SHOULD HE CARE TO BE HEARD.

THEN JOHN OF HAVEN WILL PRESENT MISTER BRUMP'S DEFENSE, MAKING SUCH ARGUMENTS AND CALLING SUCH WITNESSES AS HE DEEMS FIT.



AFTER WHICH THE KING WILL RETIRE TO CONSIDER HIS VERDICT.

THERE WILL BE NO DEMONSTRATIONS, NOR DELAYS, NOR DISCUSSION NOT IMMEDIATELY RELEVANT TO THE CASE BEFORE US.



AND THERE WILL BE NO APPEAL FOLLOWING THE KING'S JUDGMENT.

IS THIS CLEAR TO ALL?





**MARCH** WITH ME, BOYS. IF WE STAND TOGETHER, **NONE** CAN DEFY US.

AND WHAT EXACTLY ARE WE GOING TO **DO** WHEN WE REACH THE KING'S HIGH KEEP?



WE'LL DEMAND THAT THE KING HEAR OUR GRIEVANCE AND PUT A **STOP** TO THE TRIAL, RELEASING THE MIGHTY BRUMP TO US.

FAILING THAT, WE MAY HAVE TO **FORCE** THE ISSUE.



YOU LEAD US IN ARMED INSURRECTION AGAINST THE **KING**?

THAT'S TREASON, CERTAIN.

IS IT TREASON TO REQUIRE THE BENEVOLENCE THAT WAS **PROMISED** US, AFORE WE EVER BENT KNEE?



EVEN OUR **OWN** GREAT EMPEROR OF OLD KEPT HIS PROMISES.

WELL, SURE, BUT ONLY BECAUSE HE PROMISED US NAUGHT BUT BLOODY BATTLE, DEATH, HARDSHIP AND BRUTAL SERVICE WITHOUT END.



AND REGULAR PAY, AND FULL STEWPOTS, AND MANY A CHANCE TO CLEAVE THE SKULLS OF OUR ENEMIES. CAN I BE THE ONLY ONE WHO **MISSSES** THAT?

UH OH!

WHAT'S HE DOING HERE?

**GRINDER!**

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE OUTFITTED FOR WAR? ARE YOU THINKING TO JOIN US?

NO, I'M THINKING TO BASH IN A FEW **GOBLIN HEADS** IF YOU DON'T ALL TURN AROUND AND GO HOME.

WE TOOK A SOLEMN OATH TO THIS GREATEST OF ALL KINGS, AND I WON'T BREAK IT. NOR WILL I STAND ASIDE AND ALLOW **OTHERS** TO.

I'LL KILL ANY WHO TRY. AND I'LL HUNT DOWN ALL WHO GET PAST ME, AND KILL YOU IN THE DAYS AND WEEKS TO COME. KNOW **THAT** MUCH FOR A FACT.

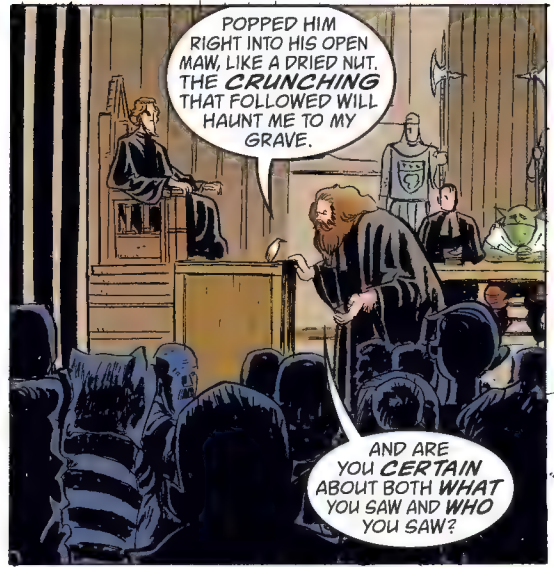
THE FLYCATCHER IS MY KING AND MY FRIEND. **NONE** WILL TROUBLE HIM ON THIS DAY WHEN HE ALREADY HAS SO MANY TROUBLES TO VEX HIM.

GO HOME, I SAY. THIS DEMONSTRATION IS DONE.





THEN MISTER BRUMP JUST GRABBED POOR MISTER SEEDCRATE UP IN HIS FIST AND ATE HIM.



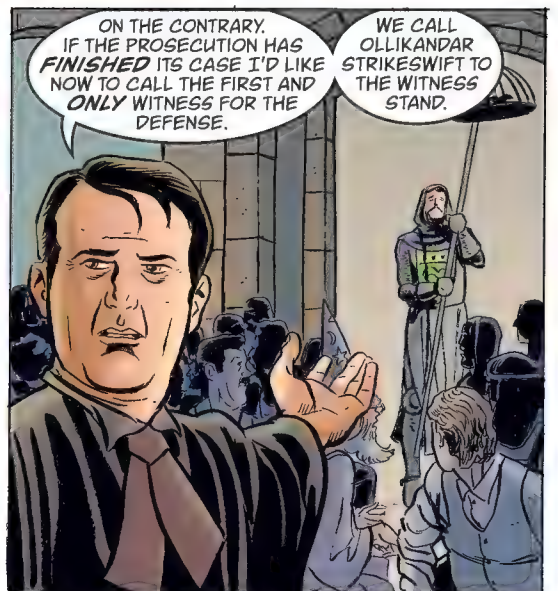
AND ARE YOU CERTAIN ABOUT BOTH WHAT YOU SAW AND WHO YOU SAW?



NO, WE'VE ALREADY CONCEDED THAT MISTER BRUMP DID INDEED EAT MISTER SEEDCRATE.



THEN YOU'LL BE PRESENTING NO CASE AT ALL?

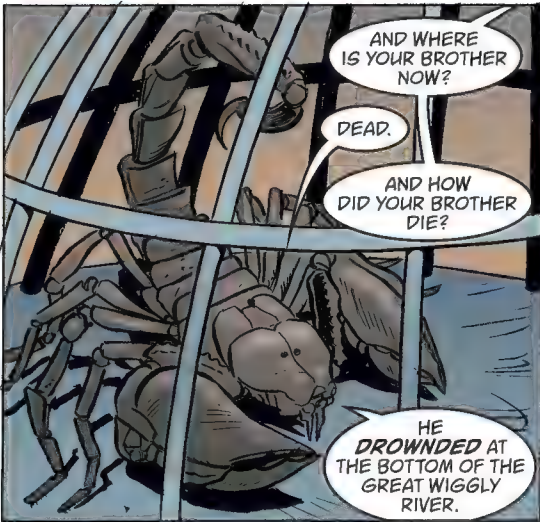


WE CALL OLLIKANDAR STRIKESWIFT TO THE WITNESS STAND.



ARE YOU OLLIKANDAR, BROTHER TO GALLIFAR STRIKESWIFT?

YES, I AM. I TOLD YOU AS MUCH, DIDN'T I?



AND WHERE IS YOUR BROTHER NOW?

DEAD.

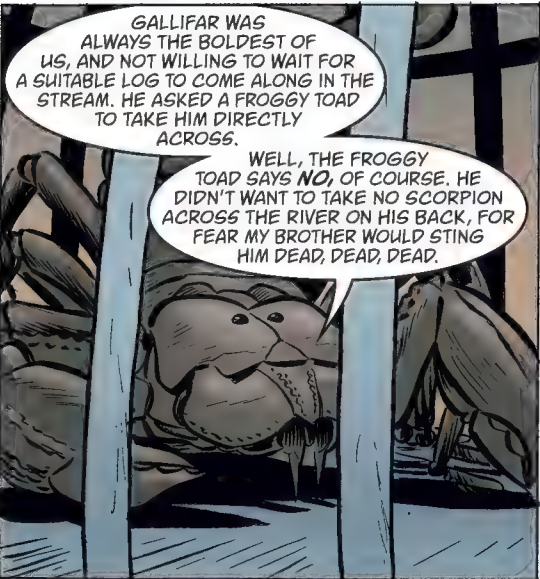
AND HOW DID YOUR BROTHER DIE?

HE DROWNED AT THE BOTTOM OF THE GREAT WIGGLY RIVER.



AND HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?

WELL, WE ALL NEEDED TO CROSS THE RIVER, DIDN'T WE? YES, WE DID.



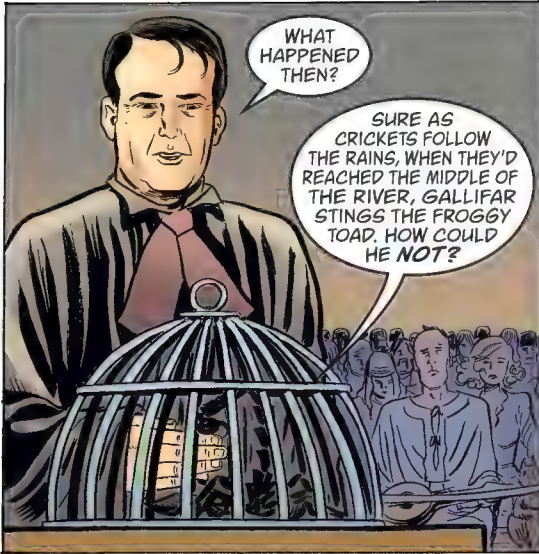
GALLIFAR WAS ALWAYS THE BOLDEST OF US, AND NOT WILLING TO WAIT FOR A SUITABLE LOG TO COME ALONG IN THE STREAM. HE ASKED A FROGGY TOAD TO TAKE HIM DIRECTLY ACROSS.

WELL, THE FROGGY TOAD SAYS NO, OF COURSE. HE DIDN'T WANT TO TAKE NO SCORPION ACROSS THE RIVER ON HIS BACK, FOR FEAR MY BROTHER WOULD STING HIM DEAD, DEAD, DEAD.



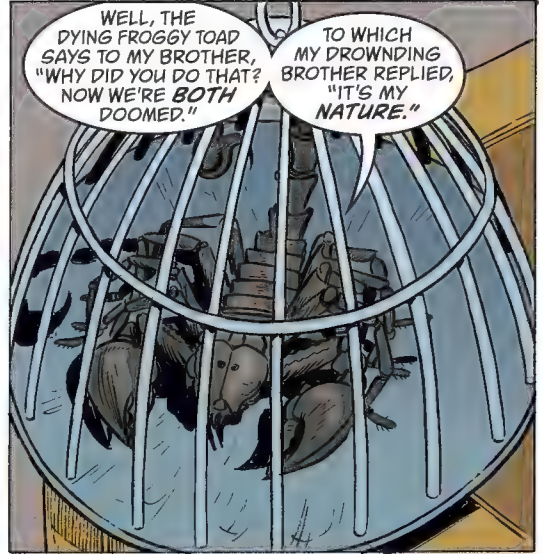
BUT MY BROTHER TELLS HIM, "WHY WOULD I STING YOU, BECAUSE THEN I'D SURELY DROWN?" WELL, THE FROGGY TOAD CONSIDERS THIS AND AGREES TO TAKE HIM ACROSS.

SO MY BROTHER JUMPS ON THE FROGGY TOAD'S BACK AND THEY START ACROSS THE RIVER. WE WERE ALL IMPRESSED WITH GALLIFAR ON THAT DAY, LET ME TELL YOU.



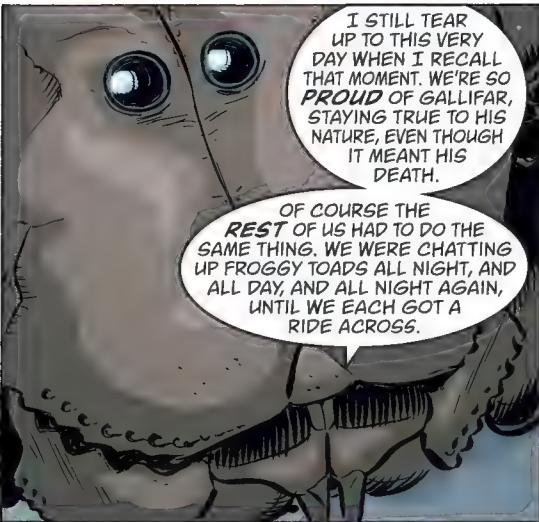
WHAT HAPPENED THEN?

SURE AS CRICKETS FOLLOW THE RAINS, WHEN THEY'D REACHED THE MIDDLE OF THE RIVER, GALLIFAR STINGS THE FROGGY TOAD. HOW COULD HE NOT?



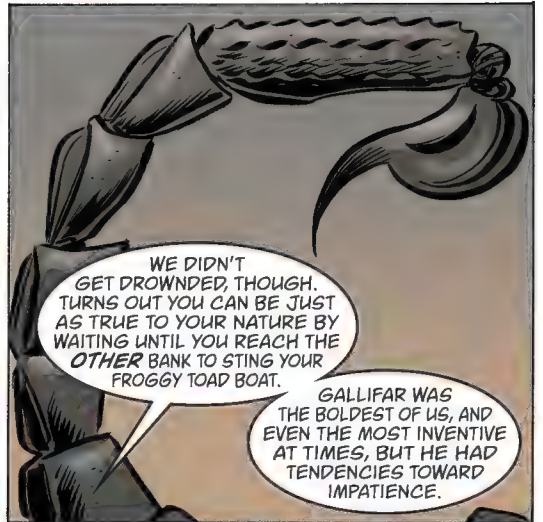
WELL, THE DYING FROGGY TOAD SAYS TO MY BROTHER, "WHY DID YOU DO THAT? NOW WE'RE BOTH DOOMED."

TO WHICH MY DROWNING BROTHER REPLIED, "IT'S MY NATURE."



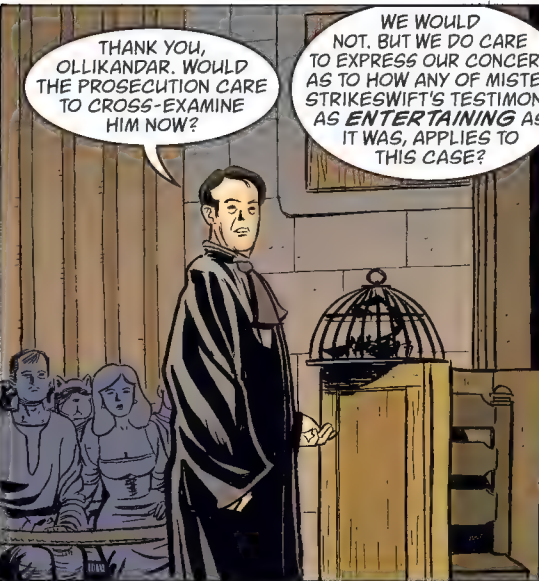
I STILL TEAR UP TO THIS VERY DAY WHEN I RECALL THAT MOMENT. WE'RE SO PROUD OF GALLIFAR, STAYING TRUE TO HIS NATURE, EVEN THOUGH IT MEANT HIS DEATH.

OF COURSE THE REST OF US HAD TO DO THE SAME THING. WE WERE CHATTING UP FROGGY TOADS ALL NIGHT, AND ALL DAY, AND ALL NIGHT AGAIN, UNTIL WE EACH GOT A RIDE ACROSS.



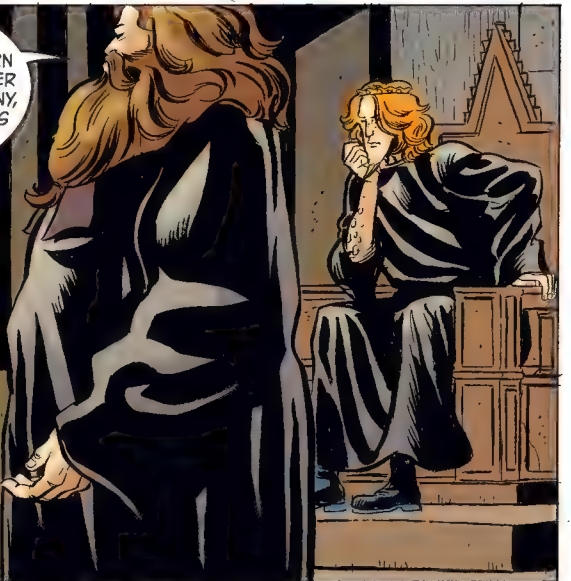
WE DIDN'T GET DROWNED, THOUGH. TURNS OUT YOU CAN BE JUST AS TRUE TO YOUR NATURE BY WAITING UNTIL YOU REACH THE OTHER BANK TO STING YOUR FROGGY TOAD BOAT.

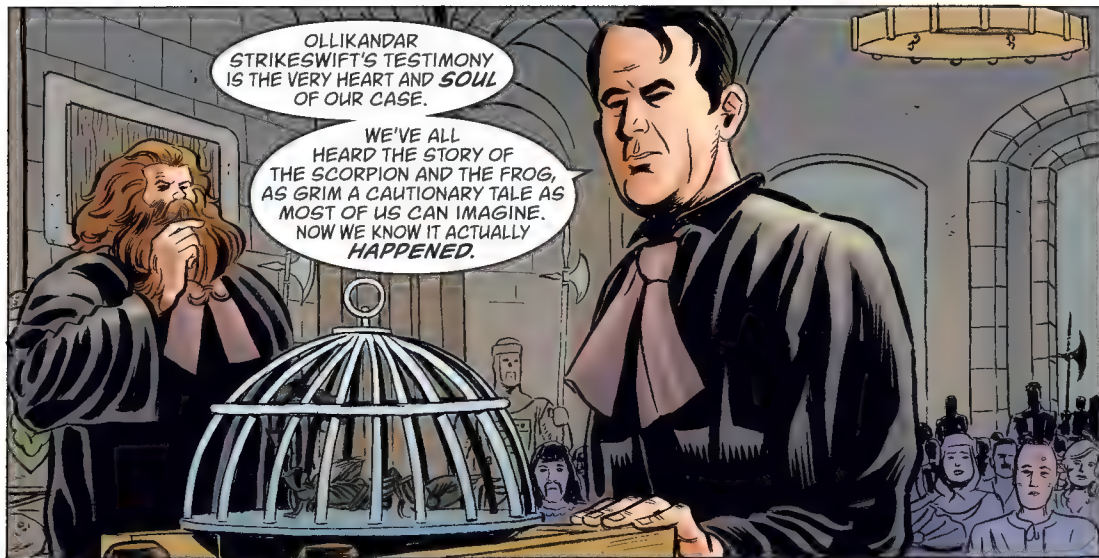
GALLIFAR WAS THE BOLDEST OF US, AND EVEN THE MOST INVENTIVE AT TIMES, BUT HE HAD TENDENCIES TOWARD IMPATIENCE.



THANK YOU, OLLIKANDAR. WOULD THE PROSECUTION CARE TO CROSS-EXAMINE HIM NOW?

WE WOULD NOT. BUT WE DO CARE TO EXPRESS OUR CONCERN AS TO HOW ANY OF MISTER STRIKESWIFT'S TESTIMONY, AS ENTERTAINING AS IT WAS, APPLIES TO THIS CASE?





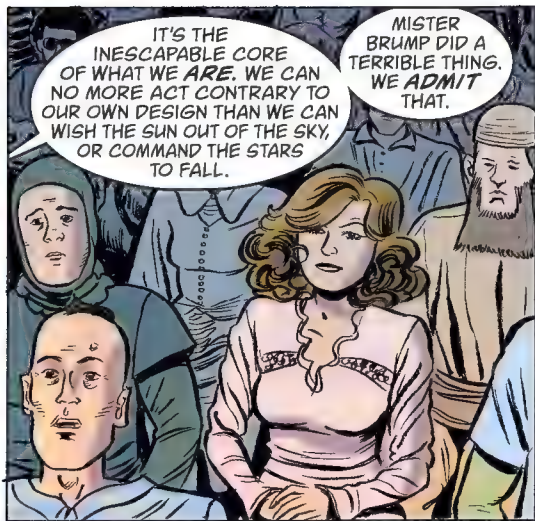
OLLIKANDAR STRIKESWIFT'S TESTIMONY IS THE VERY HEART AND SOUL OF OUR CASE.

WE'VE ALL HEARD THE STORY OF THE SCORPION AND THE FROG, AS GRIM A CAUTIONARY TALE AS MOST OF US CAN IMAGINE. NOW WE KNOW IT ACTUALLY HAPPENED.



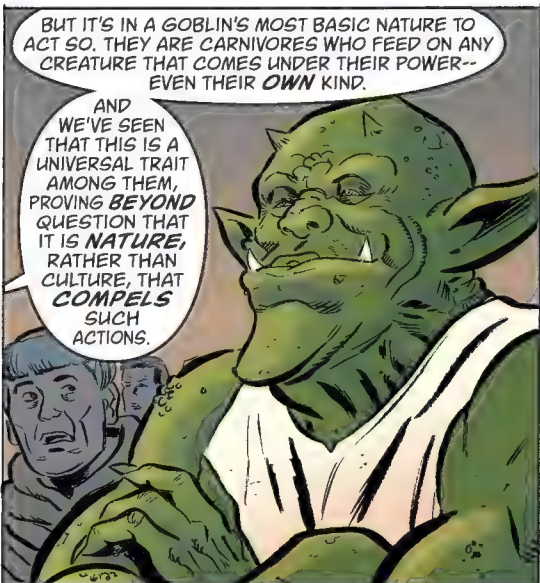
AND ITS LESSON IS CLEAR. BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE, BEFORE KIN, OR KING, OR COUNTRY, WE ARE ALL SUBJECT TO OUR OWN NATURE.

ACTING ACCORDING TO THE WAY GOD MADE US, EVEN TO OUR OWN DETRIMENT, ISN'T A DECISION WE MAKE. IT ISN'T AN OATH WE TAKE AND CAN BREAK.



IT'S THE INESCAPABLE CORE OF WHAT WE ARE. WE CAN NO MORE ACT CONTRARY TO OUR OWN DESIGN THAN WE CAN WISH THE SUN OUT OF THE SKY, OR COMMAND THE STARS TO FALL.

MISTER BRUMP DID A TERRIBLE THING. WE ADMIT THAT.



BUT IT'S IN A GOBLIN'S MOST BASIC NATURE TO ACT SO. THEY ARE CARNIVORES WHO FEED ON ANY CREATURE THAT COMES UNDER THEIR POWER-- EVEN THEIR OWN KIND.

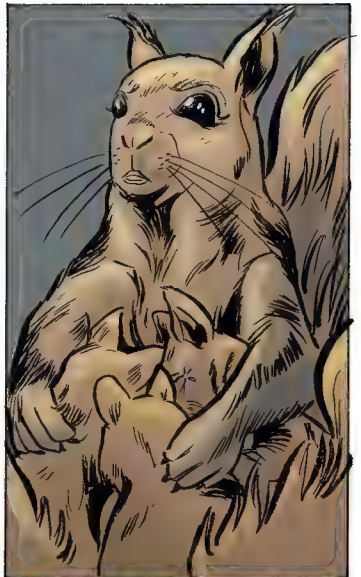
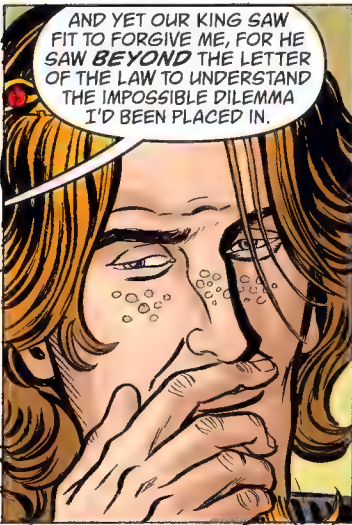
AND WE'VE SEEN THAT THIS IS A UNIVERSAL TRAIT AMONG THEM, PROVING BEYOND QUESTION THAT IT IS NATURE, RATHER THAN CULTURE, THAT COMPELS SUCH ACTIONS.



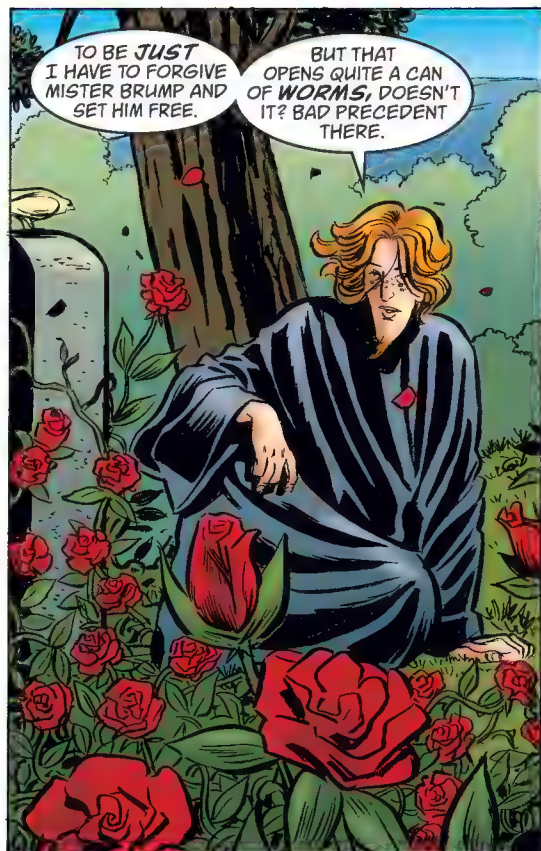
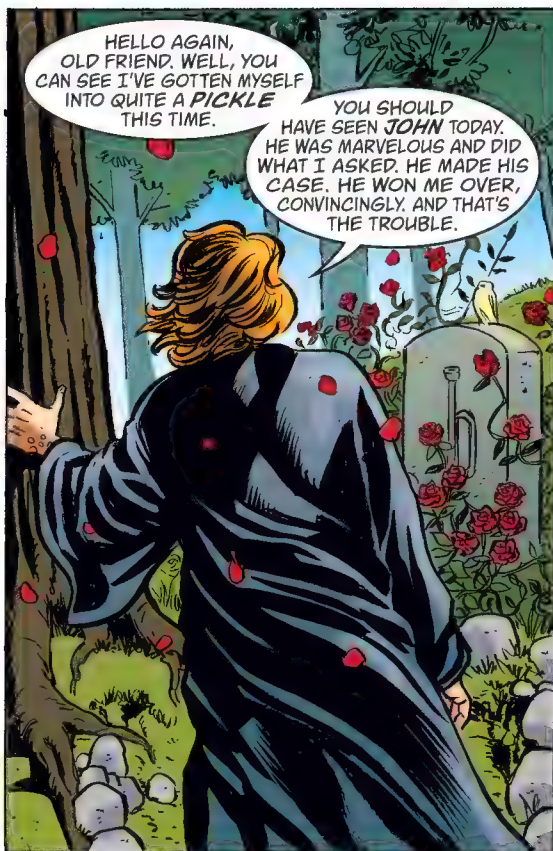
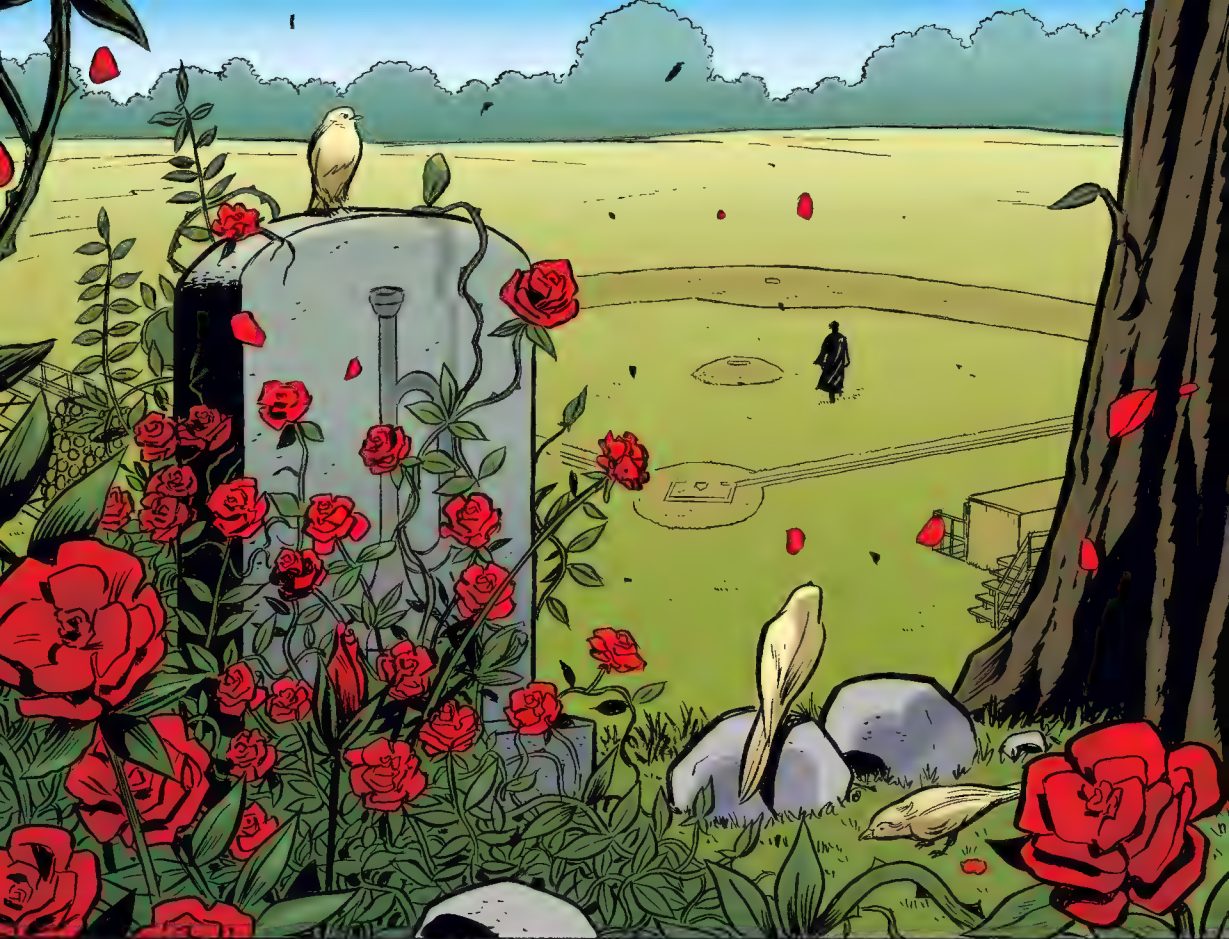
HOW THEN CAN WE HOLD MISTER BRUMP RESPONSIBLE FOR THE INCIDENT OF LAST NIGHT?

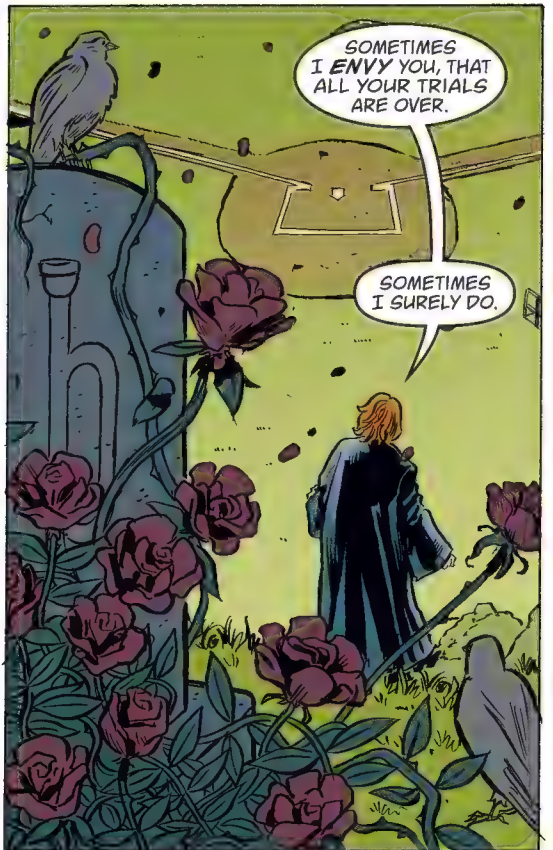
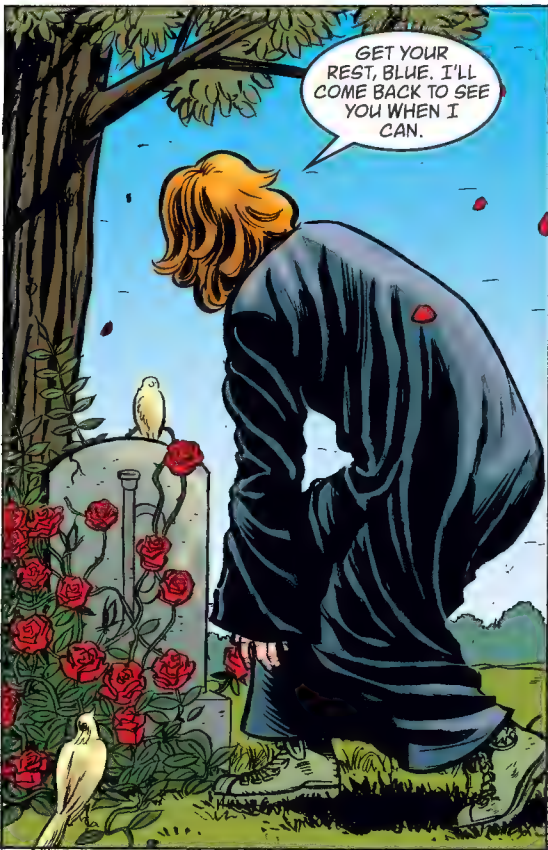
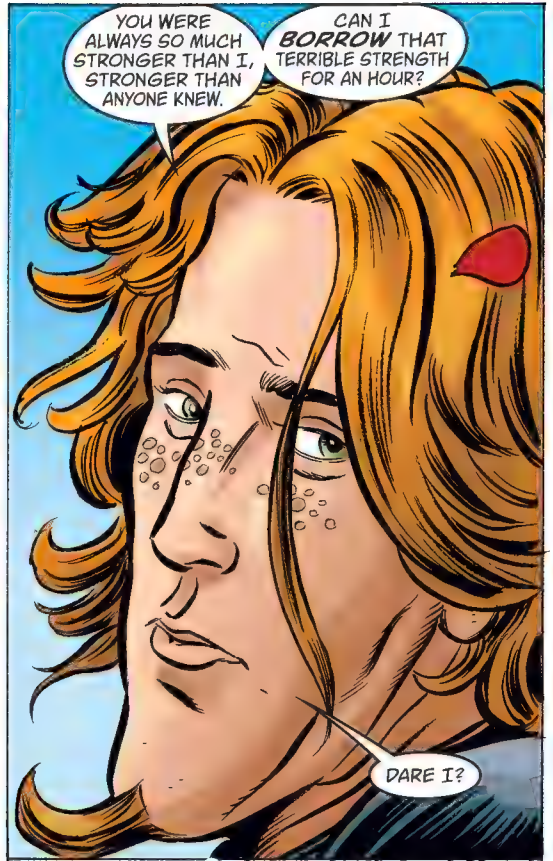
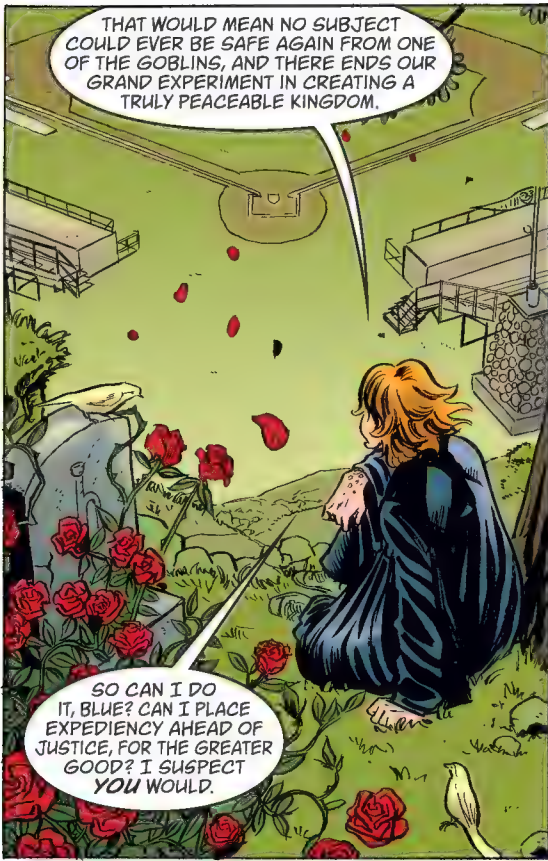
WE CAN'T.

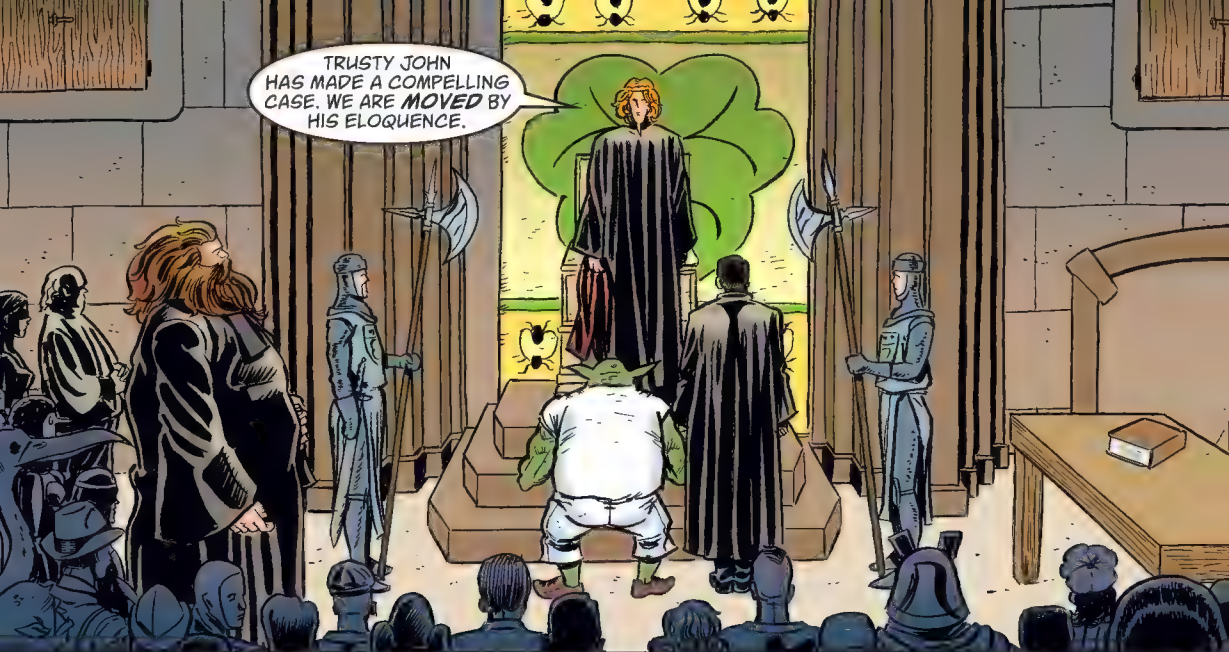
IT WOULD BE BETTER-- MORE JUST-- TO PUT HIS VERY MAKER ON THE STAND AND DEMAND AN ACCOUNTING.











TRUSTY JOHN HAS MADE A COMPELLING CASE. WE ARE MOVED BY HIS ELOQUENCE.



BUT WE ARE UNCONVINCED.



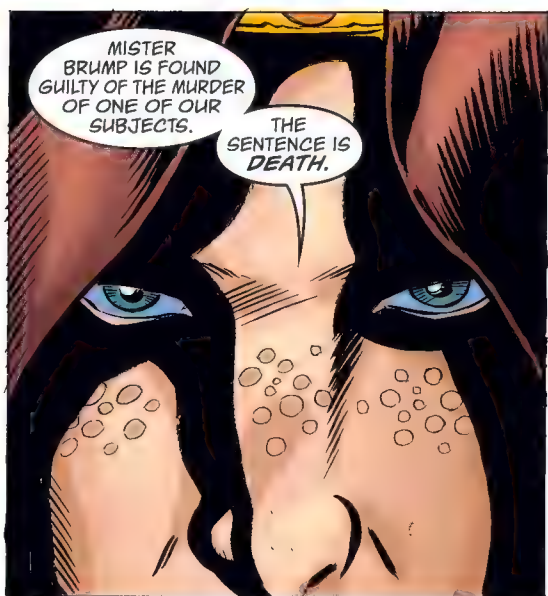
MISTER BRUMP SUBJECTED HIMSELF WILLINGLY TO OUR LAW AND JUSTICE. HE WAS NOT FORCED INTO OUR SERVICE. NO ONE EVER HAS OR WILL BE.

MISTER BRUMP IS FULLY POSSESSED OF SPEECH AND REASON, AND THEREFORE MUST BE ASSUMED TO KNOW THE BOUNDS OF HIS OWN NATURE.



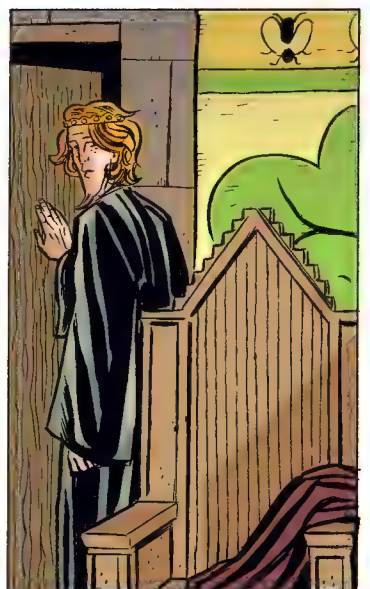
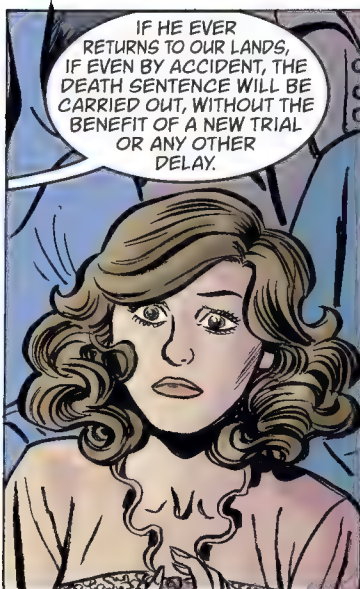
IF HE LACKED THE STRENGTH OF WILL AND CHARACTER TO SO COMPLY WITH OUR LAWS, IT WAS HIS RESPONSIBILITY TO SO NOTIFY US AND REJECT OUR OFFER OF CITIZENSHIP.

THAT APPLIES TO ALL GOBLINS IN OUR SERVICE.



MISTER BRUMP IS FOUND GUILTY OF THE MURDER OF ONE OF OUR SUBJECTS.

THE SENTENCE IS DEATH.



THE FOLLOWING MORNING...

AUGH I D!' WHA HAVE A WEE SNACK. NAUGH WRONG WHI A BIT OF SUP. NAGH T'ALL.

THAT'S IT THEN. A CRISIS NARROWLY AVERTED.

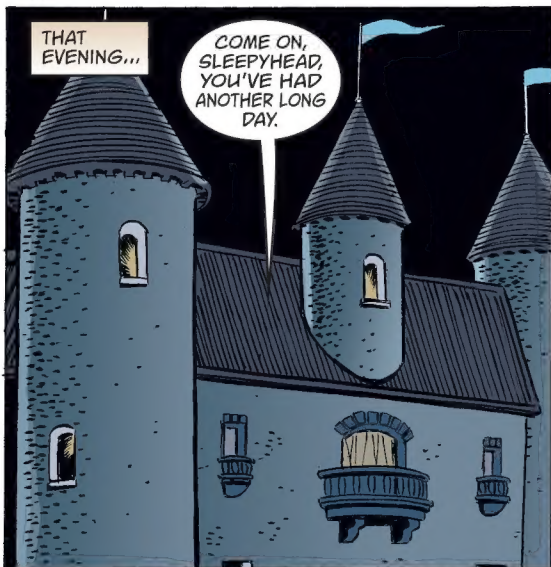
PERHAPS. NO ONE'S TOO HAPPY WITH YOUR VERDICT, SIRE.

BUT THEY'RE NOT RIOTING AT LEAST. IT APPEARS TO BE MISERY EVERYONE CAN LIVE WITH.

SPEAKING OF RIOTS--THE LACK OF RIOTS--I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR STEPPING IN WHEN YOU DID, GRINDER. I WON'T FORGET YOUR LOYALTY WHEN IT COUNTED MOST.

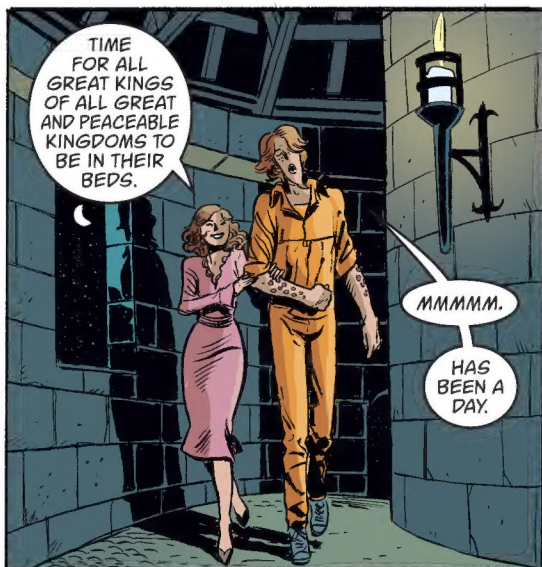
HRRMMMM.

AN OATH IS AN OATH. WE'RE THE WORDS WE LIVE BY, OR WE'RE ANIMALS. NO ROOM FOR INTERPRETATION.



THAT EVENING...

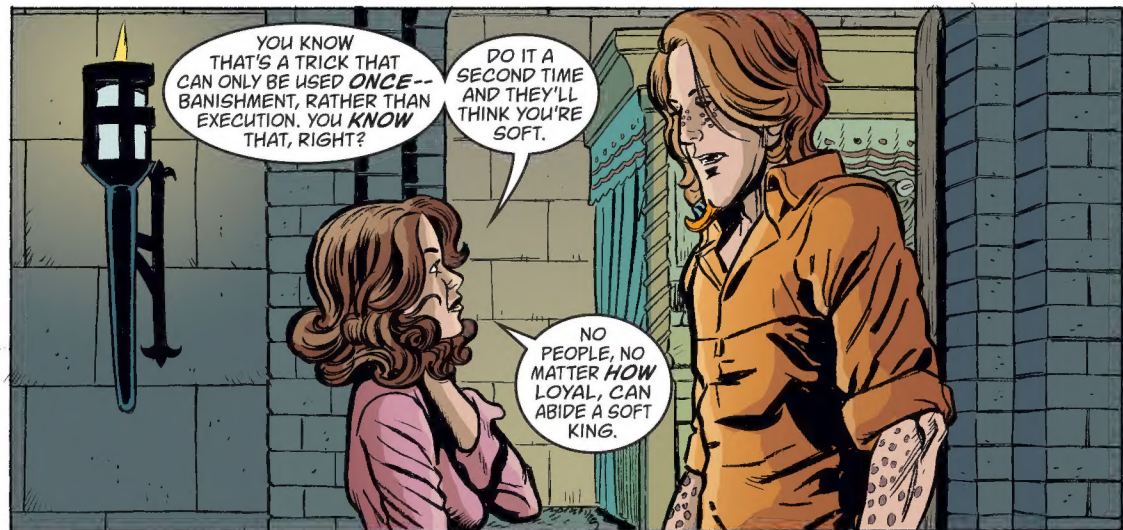
COME ON, SLEEPYHEAD, YOU'VE HAD ANOTHER LONG DAY.



TIME FOR ALL GREAT KINGS OF ALL GREAT AND PEACEABLE KINGDOMS TO BE IN THEIR BEDS.

MMMMMM.

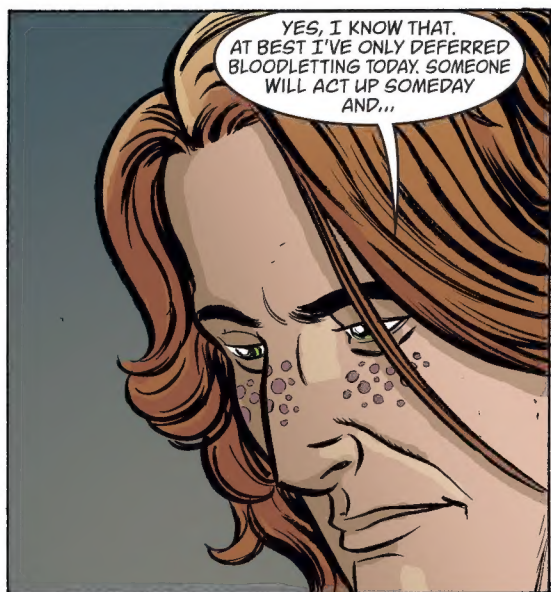
HAS BEEN A DAY.



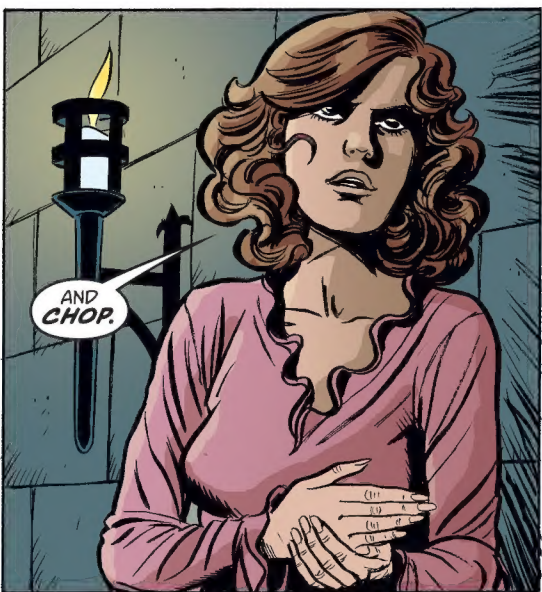
YOU KNOW THAT'S A TRICK THAT CAN ONLY BE USED *ONCE*-- BANISHMENT, RATHER THAN EXECUTION. YOU *KNOW* THAT, RIGHT?

DO IT A SECOND TIME AND THEY'LL THINK YOU'RE SOFT.

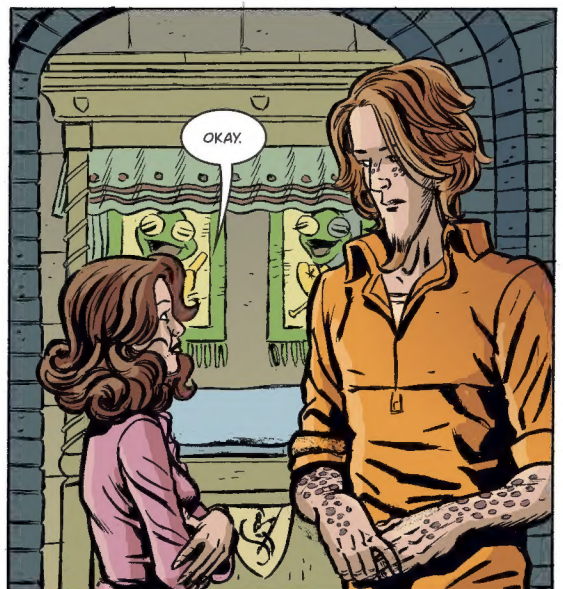
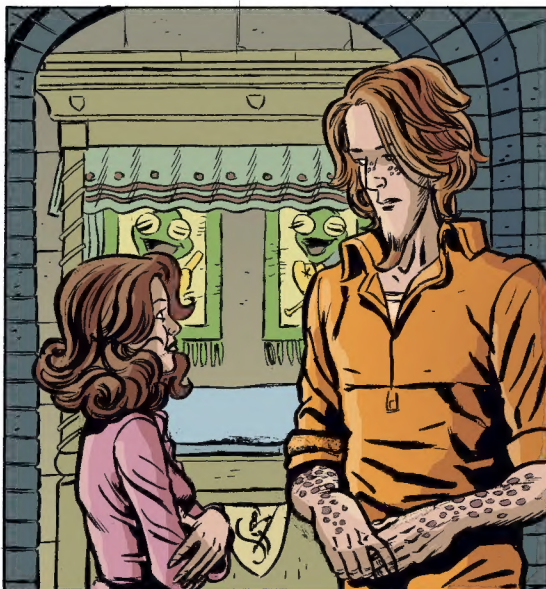
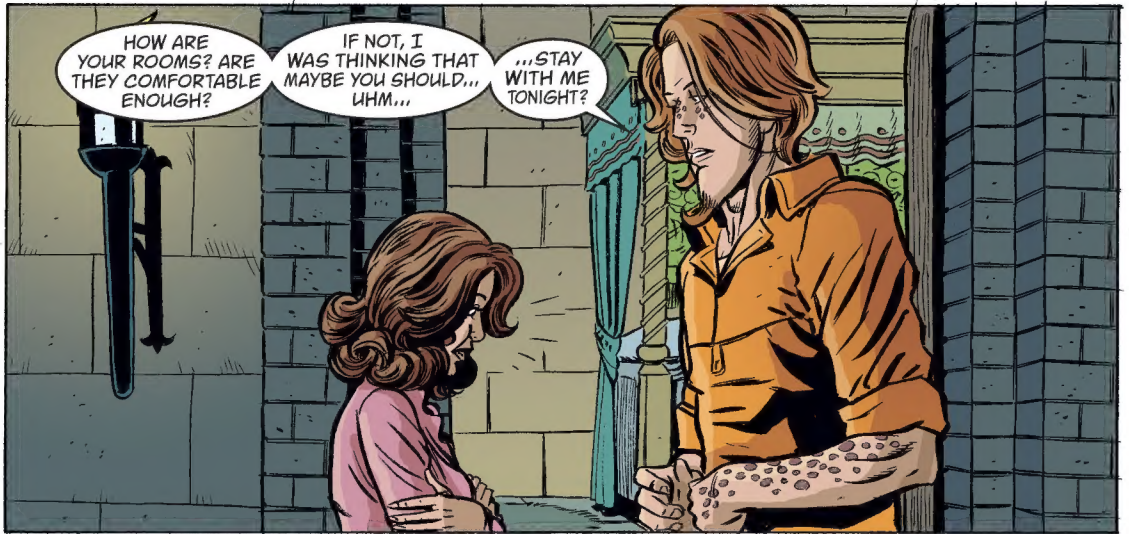
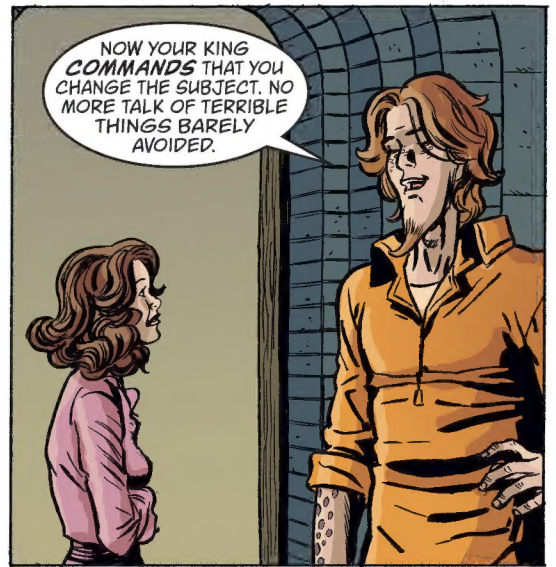
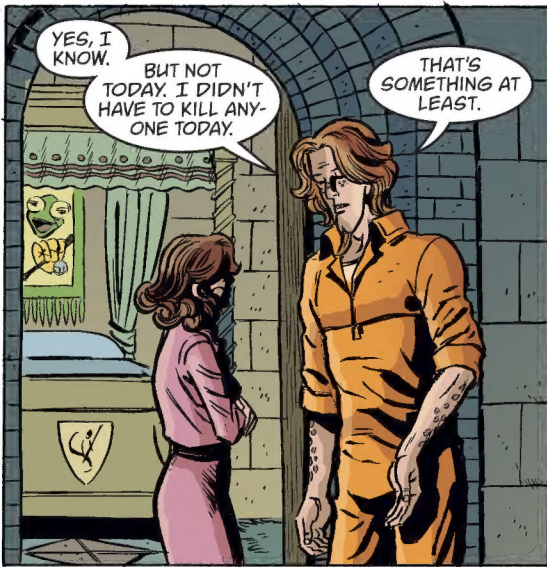
NO PEOPLE, NO MATTER *HOW* LOYAL, CAN ABIDE A SOFT KING.



YES, I KNOW THAT. AT BEST I'VE ONLY DEFERRED BLOODLETTING TODAY. SOMEONE WILL ACT UP SOMEDAY AND...



AND CHOP.



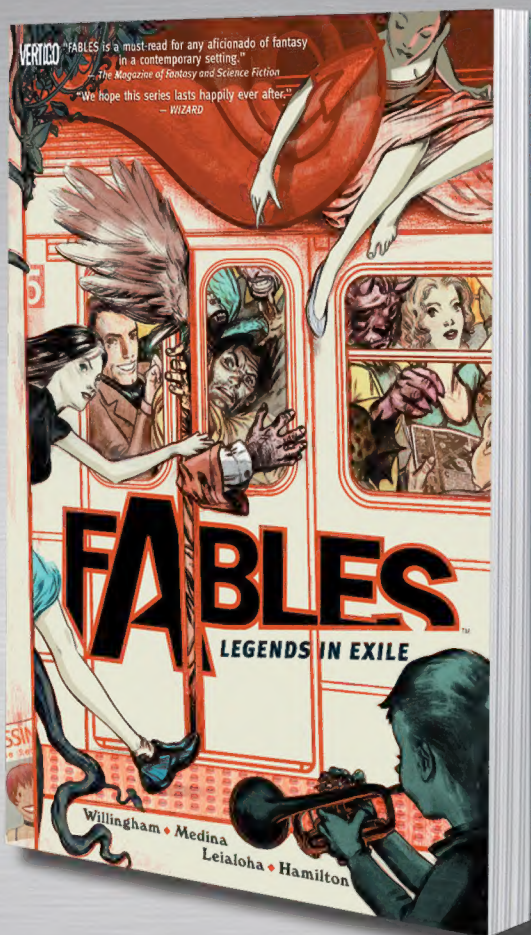
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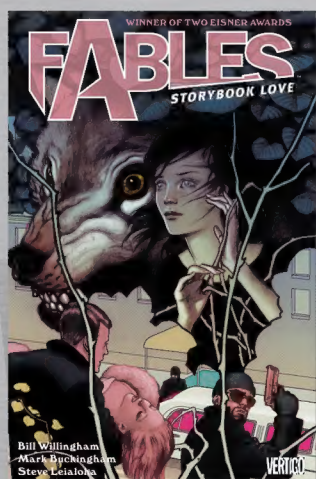
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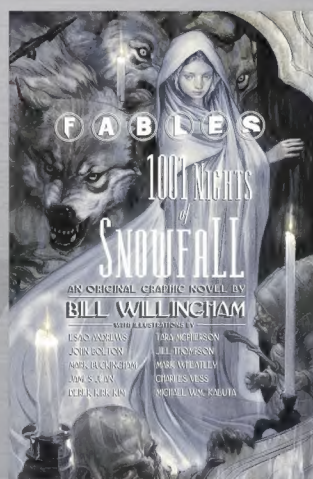
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HOMELANDS



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NATHAN